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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 002023

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [USUN](#) [EU](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [NL](#)  
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/SYRIA: DUTCH AVOID HIGH LEVEL  
CONTACTS, BUT ...

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Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Schofer; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

(C) EUR PDAS Volker delivered reftel demarche, September 12, to MFA Deputy Director General for Political Affairs Wim Geerts. Volker stressed that we do not believe that high-level European contacts with the Syrians have yielded progress, and we therefore would encourage EU members to avoid such approaches. Our top concern in Lebanon, he said, is to avoid a situation where an international force merely maintains stability, while a recalcitrant Syria and Iran reararm Hizbollah. Geerts, whose Foreign Minister pointedly avoided visiting Syria during a recent trip to the region, asked whether we might not explore a strategy of driving a wedge between Syria and Iran. Volker reiterated that the time was not yet right for the EU to engage with Damascus.  
ARNALL